

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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EB-11 FRB-03 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07

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SS-20 STR-08 CEA-02 DODE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 L-03

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R 300732Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1111

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 1526

BEIRUT FOR AGATT PITCHER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, SY, US

SUBJECT: CALL ON MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

REF: STATE 160976

1. ON JULY 25 CHARGE PAID COURTESY CALL ON MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRARIAN REFORM, AHMAD HASAN AL-ASAD, TO EXTEND PERSONAL INVITATION TO HIM AND OFFICIALS OF HIS MINISTRY TO VISIT AMERICAN PAVILION AT DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR. MINISTER RESTATED WHAT HAD BEEN SAID PREVIOUSLY TO ECONOMIC OFFICER THAT HE HOPES U.S. AND SYRIA WILL BE ABLE TO COOPERATE IN FIELD OF AGRICULTURE. HE WELCOMED THE VISIT BY U.S. AGRICULTURE ATTACHE FROM BEIRUT AND LOOKED FORWARD TO OPPORTUNITY FOR HIS OFFICIALS TO MEET AND DISCUSS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN COMPANIES SPECIFIC WAYS THEY MIGHT COOPERATE.

2. AGRICULTURE MINISTER ASAD MADE A POINT OF SAYING THAT
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IN THE PAST SYRIA FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO COOPERATE WITH THE

U.S. BECAUSE OF U.S. ASSISTANCE TO SYRIA'S "ENEMY."
HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT U.S. WOULD NOW MAKE EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND SYRIA AND ARABS' POSITION. CHARGE REPLIED THAT MISTAKES HAD BEEN MADE ON BOTH SIDES IN THE PAST BUT THAT U.S. AND SYRIA WERE NOW ENTERING NEW PHASE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND BOTH SIDES SHOULD WORK TOGETHER IN THOSE AREAS WHERE COOPERATION WAS POSSIBLE AND DISCUSS THOSE MATTERS WHERE THERE ARE DIFFERENCES. CHARGE CONCLUDED THAT THE IMPORTANT THING NOW IS TO MAINTAIN THE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION IN THE AGRICULTURE AREA WAS CERTAINLY ONE ASPECT OF THE NEW SYRIAN-U.S. DIALOUGE. THE MINISTER AGREED.

3. IN COURSE CONVERSATION, MINISTER ASAD MENTIONED THAT DURING PAST YEAR MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAD PURCHASED SEVERAL TONS OF SOYBEANS FROM JACOB HARTZ AND THAT AFTER DISTRIBUTION TO FARMERS MINISTRY DISCOVERED THAT THE SEED WAS ALMOST 100 PERCENT DAMAGED. HE SAID THE COMPANY HAS INITIALLY AGREED TO REPLACE THE SEED BUT THAT THEY HAD NOT HEARD FROM THE COMPANY IN QUITE SOME TIME. THE MINISTER SAID HE WOULD APPRECIATE OUR LOOKING INTO THIS.

4. IN CONNECTION WITH OUR ACTIVITIES AT DAMASCUS FAIR WE HAVE PLANNED SPECIAL TOUR OF PAVILION FOR OFFICIALS OF MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND CHAMBER OF AGRICULTURE. THIS WILL BE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR AGRICULTURE ATTACHE PITCHER TO VISIT DAMASCUS NOT ONLY TO MEET THESE OFFICIALS BUT TO ARRANGE OTHER OPPOINTMENTS. APPRECIATE RESPONSE IN REFTEL. WE, TOO, WORKING WITH AGRICULTURE ATTACHE AND WILL PUT FORWARD SOME IDEAS FOR OPERATION IN THIS FIELD.
SCOTES

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